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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
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INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000905

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA, NSC FOR ABRAMS/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#)
SUBJECT: GAZA: CEASEFIRE DECLARED, BUT FIGHTING CONTINUES

REF: A. JERUSALEM 899

[B](#). JERUSALEM 891
[C](#). JERUSALEM 882

CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL JAKE WALLS, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D)

[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY. SEPARATE CEASEFIRES ORDERED BY HAMAS AND PRESIDENT MAHMUD ABBAS (ABU MAZEN) HAD A CALMING INFLUENCE EARLY MAY 17, BUT VIOLENCE RESUMED BY 1330 LOCAL. FIGHTING SPREAD TO RAFAH AND THE CENTRAL GAZA STRIP, WITH 5 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN FACTIONAL CLASHES AS OF 1700 LOCAL. PRESIDENT ABBAS POSTPONED A PLANNED TRIP TO GAZA TO EASE TENSIONS. HAMAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOST OF THE 22 QASSAM ROCKETS THAT STRUCK ISRAEL THROUGH 1600 17 MAY 07 (LOCAL) SINCE THE LAST UPDATE (REF A). ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES ON HAMAS FACILITIES AND VEHICLES KILLED AT LEAST 4 ADDITIONAL PALESTINIANS AS OF 1700. NEITHER SIDE IS PURSUING POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND FIGHTING IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

CEASEFIRE DECLARED

[2](#). (SBU) HAMAS DECLARED A UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE EFFECTIVE 2000 ON 16 MAY, ACCORDING TO PRESS. CONTACTS IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE SAY PRESIDENT ABBAS ALSO AGREED TO DECLARE A UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE FOLLOWING A SERIES OF PHONE CALLS BETWEEN PRESIDENT ABBAS AND DAMASCUS-BASED HAMAS LEADER KHALID MISHA'AL. THEY REPORT HE ORDERED ALL PASF TO HOLD IN CURRENT POSITIONS AND STOP FIGHTING AT 2030 LOCAL ON MAY 16.

[3](#). (C) CONTACTS IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT ABBAS CANCELED A PLANNED TRIP TO JORDAN AND INTENDED TO GO TO GAZA ON MAY 17. ABBAS LATER DELAYED THIS TRIP FOR AT LEAST A FEW DAYS, HOWEVER.

CLASHES BLOODY TALLY

[4](#). (C) FROM LATE MAY 12 TO THE TIME THE CEASEFIRES WERE DECLARED, THE PA HEALTH MINISTRY REPORTS 47 KILLED AND 211 INJURED, 28 OF WHOM ARE IN CRITICAL CONDITION. PALESTINIAN SECURITY CONTACTS REPORT THAT 32 OF THE DEAD ARE FATAH AND PASF UNDER THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY, 12 ARE HAMAS, AND 3 WERE BYSTANDERS. OF THE FATAH/PASF FATALITIES 11 WERE NSF, 3 PG, 13 PSO AND FATAH "SPECIAL FORCE," AND 5 AL-AQSA BRIGADES. FOLLOWING THE CEASEFIRE, AN ADDITIONAL 5 PALESTINIANS WERE REPORTED KILLED LATE MAY 16, AND AT LEAST 7 WERE KILLED (INCLUDING IN ISRAELI ATTACKS IN GAZA) AS OF 1700 ON MAY 17.

DESPITE CEASEFIRE, VIOLENCE CONTINUES AND SPREADS TO RAFAH

15. (SBU) WHILE THE CEASEFIRE DID LEAD TO SOME REDUCTION IN GAZA CITY STREET FIGHTING, SPORADIC CLASHES CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT OF MAY 16. 5 NSF SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN FIGHTING WITH THE "EXECUTIVE FORCE": TWO KILLED IN A MORTAR/MACHINE GUN ATTACK ON AN NSF BASE IN JABALIYA AT 2130; TWO BY AN RPG/SMALL ARMS FIRE IN GAZA CITY; AND ONE IN GUNBATTLE IN MAGHAZI CAMP, CENTRAL GAZA. ONE "EXECUTIVE FORCE" GUNMEN AND TWO HAMAS MILITARY-WING MEMBER ALSO WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED IN CLASHES, ONE IN JABALIYA, ONE IN GAZA CITY AND ONE IN RAFAH. FATAH MILITIA FIRED SHOTS AT PM HANIYAH'S HOUSE AROUND MIDNIGHT.

16. (C) EARLY MAY 17, GAZA CITY WAS LARGELY QUIET, WITH ONLY SPORADIC SHOOTING AND MOST ACTIVITY RELEGATED TO BOTH EXECUTIVE FORCE AND NSF TROOPS SETTING UP AND REINFORCING ROADBLOCKS TO ESTABLISH ZONES OF CONTROL. BY 1330, HOWEVER, HEAVY FIGHTING BROKE OUT IN GAZA CITY AND RAFAH, LARGELY AROUND FUNERALS FOR PREVIOUS DAYS' DEAD. PALESTINIAN SECURITY CONTACTS SAY HIGH-PROFILE PUBLIC FUNERALS OF SLAIN PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS ARE CAUSING AS MUCH ANGER AS THE FACTIONAL CLASHES THEMSELVES. HAMAS MILITARY-WING FIGHTERS LAID HEAVY FIRE ON THE PSO HQ IN RAFAH, KILLING TWO PSO GUARDS AND INJURING 14. AT 1345, HAMAS SPOKESMEN CLAIMED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE PSO HAD KIDNAPPED AND EXECUTED A MILITARY-WING FIGHTER, MUHAMMAD MUSHTAHA, AROUND NOON. UNRWA GAZA OPERATIONS CHIEF JOHN GING AND OTHER UN CONTACTS SAY UN STAFF REMAIN AT HOME MAY 17, BEING UNABLE TO REACH THEIR GAZA CITY OFFICES.

QASSAM ROCKETS

17. (SBU) 22 QASSAM ROCKETS STRUCK ISRAEL THROUGH 1600 17 MAY 07 (LOCAL) SINCE THE LAST UPDATE (REF A). HAMAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOST OF THE LAUNCHES, WHILE PIJ CLAIMED TWO LAUNCHES. ROCKETS STRIKING SDEROT AND NEIGHBORING KIBBUTZIM LIGHTLY INJURED 4 AND DAMAGED AN APARTMENT BUILDING, HOUSE, HIGH SCHOOL AND TWO VEHICLES, AND TEMPORARILY KNOCKED OUT ELECTRICITY IN MUCH OF SDEROT LATE MAY 16.

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE AND INCURSION IN BAYT LAHIYA

18. (SBU) AN IAF MISSILE STRIKE ON A GAZA CITY "EXECUTIVE FORCE" HQ KILLED 2 AND INJURED 25, ACCORDING TO PA SECURITY CONTACTS, UN STAFF AND ISRAELI MEDIA REPORTS. THESE SOURCES REPORT THE IAF ALSO FIRED AT TWO VEHICLES CARRYING HAMAS MILITANTS IN GAZA CITY AND AN "EXECUTIVE FORCE" POSITION ON JALAA STREET IN GAZA CITY, KILLING 4 HAMAS MEMBERS TOTAL, AND HIT A PIJ OFFICE NEAR JABALIYA CAMP. PALESTINIAN CONTACTS REPORT THE IDF DISPATCHED TANKS AND INFANTRY SEVERAL HUNDRED METERS PAST THE GAZA PERIMETER FENCE INTO BAYT LAHIYA TO INTERDICT QASSAM CREWS O/A 1100 ON MAY 17.

19. (SBU) "EXECUTIVE FORCE" SPOKESMAN ISLAM SHAWAN CONDEMNED FATAH/PASF PUBLICLY ON MAY 17 FOR "COORDINATING THEIR EFFORTS WITH THE ZIONIST ENEMY" WHILE NOTING THAT HAMAS IS THE FACTION DEMONSTRATING TRUE PATRIOTISM BY STRIKING AT ISRAEL AND ENDURING ISRAELI RETALIATION. THE PRESS ALSO REPORTS THAT 40 PG MEMBERS VOLUNTEERED TO DONATE BLOOD FOR "EXECUTIVE FORCE" MEMBERS HARMED IN THE IAF'S GAZA CITY AIRSTRIKE.

COMMENT

110. (C) IT APPEARS THAT NEITHER HAMAS NOR FATAH WILL SOON TIRE OF INTER-FACTIONAL FIGHTING AND THAT THE LULL IN THE MORNING OF MAY 17 WAS PRIMARILY A CHANCE FOR TIRED FORCES TO REGROUP. THE MAY 16 CEASEFIRE WAS APPARENTLY A "TIME OUT" THAT DID NOT REFLECT ANY NEW POLITICAL DYNAMIC OR RESOLUTION OF THE UNDERLYING POLITICAL ISSUES. ISRAELI STRIKES AGAINST GAZA CITY OFFICES ARE FUELING HAMAS' INFORMATION CAMPAIGN THAT CLAIMS HAMAS IS RESISTING THE OCCUPATION WHILE FATAH COOPERATES WITH ISRAEL.
WALLES